

## **Helen at Edmonds Community College CATCH (Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare) Program**

Helen Myers, 48, had served in the military for three years. While in high school, she joined the National Guard as a medical supplies specialist and was initially deployed as part of a medical emergency (MASH) unit during the Mt. St. Helen's eruption. Due to pregnancy, she was granted a humanitarian, honorable discharge. She worked odd jobs in the restaurant and telemarketing industries while raising her children, who are now grown and on their own.

After losing a job, through no fault of her own, she became jobless in rural Snohomish County, Washington. Determined to move forward, she would wake early each weekday and exit the tent she lived in to catch a 6:00 a.m. bus to the WorkSource Center in Everett. She was driven to find work since she knew that a job could lead to an apartment and a better life.

WorkSource is Washington state's joint venture to address employment needs; partners include Department of Social and Health Services/TANF, Workforce Investment Boards, and community colleges. At the WorkSource Center, Helen would sit in front of a computer screen, feeling overwhelmed, and fumble for an on-off switch, realizing that her typing skills had atrophied while she was under- and unemployed. Sensing her job search frustration and strong desire for new skills, a WorkSource veterans' representative referred her to the HPOG-CATCH Program at Everett Community College.

The CATCH Program helped Helen become computer literate. Using a learning model balanced with online and on-ground instruction, CATCH students receive a laptop computer to keep along with wraparound tech support to promote digital literacy while reducing common barriers to training. With patient, consistent support from the CATCH College Success instructor, Helen gradually gained confidence as she painstakingly learned the steps to operate the classroom's computers to access the online learning platform. She would use the Everett Community College library to complete online and on-ground assignments.

With advocacy and guidance from the CATCH navigation team, Helen received Commissioner Approved Training Benefits, allowing her to collect regular unemployment insurance benefits while attending the full-time CATCH Program. She moved into an apartment and passed the Washington State Nursing Assistant credentialing exam while completing Everett Community College's Nursing Assistant Certified (NAC) program. Helen described her HPOG-funded NAC training as humbling, but rewarding. On the first day of her NAC externship at a local long-term care facility, residents contracted a stomach flu, resulting in cleanup after cleanup. Hustling from room to room, Helen was so efficient and respectful of the residents that she was offered a position on the spot, but she explained that her goal was to complete her training first.

Helen completed her EKG Technologist certificate and, recently, the Everett Community College Phlebotomy Technologist program. With her stackable credentials, she wants to land a position as a Phlebotomist. She says, "I have a future. I have a great outlook. I am forever grateful to the CATCH Program. My confidence is back and I have goals again."